

A REPORT FROM HAITI:

Cavalry in Peacekeeping Operations

by Lieutenant Colonel Kevin C.M. Benson

The mounted patrol moves slowly down the streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. An hour earlier, the patrol had encountered a mob rather vigorously meting out vigilante justice to an alleged thief. The sergeant and his interpreter put a stop to this, although some rocks were thrown in their direction. Now the patrol is approaching a mound in the road. It is a dead body, an occasional sight in the city, and one the patrol had seen before. After one more report and coordination with the Haitian National Police, the patrol continues. In two more hours, the patrol will be over, and the unit will move back to War Eagle base, where debriefing would be followed by maintenance on the HMMWVs and weapons, a shower, then some sleep. They followed the old cavalry credo — take care of the horse, the weapon, the saddle, and then the men. Just as their horse-mounted predecessors rode the West keeping law and order, the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment (2d ACR) patrols the streets of greater Port-au-Prince, Haiti, today, maintaining a secure and stable environment for the fledgling democracy here.

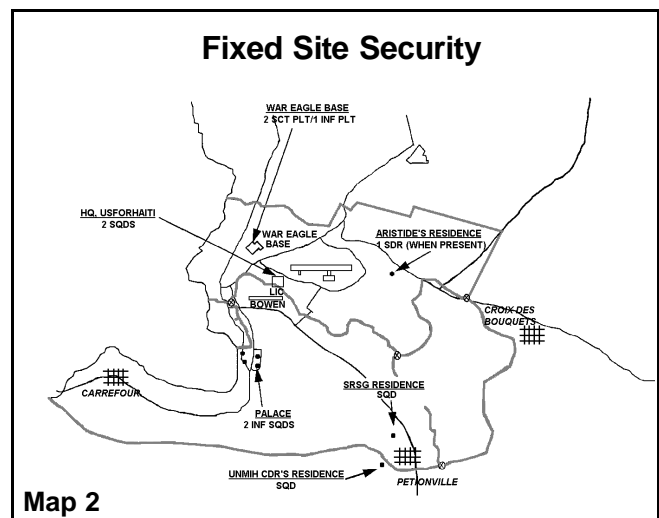
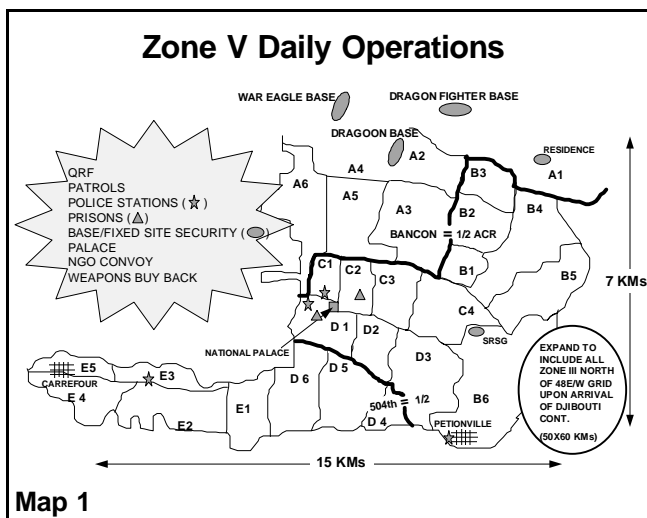
The 2d ACR's 1st Squadron, augmented by two rifle companies from the 82d Airborne Division's 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment and the 504th MP Battalion, currently provides an agile, mounted, patrolling force and the

nucleus for the Quick Reaction Force for the UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). The 3d Squadron preceded the 1st in Haiti and the 2d Squadron will close the mission. The 2d ACR has the inherent agility and weapons mix to present a range of options for the UN Force commander. The 2d ACR, though bred for combat, is equally adept at Operations Other Than War (OOTW). The Haiti mission is a prime example of the type of mission many, if not all, U.S. Army units will face in the future.

Mr. Lahkdar Brahimi, the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) in Haiti, described the emerging new world order as a place where the military forces of the world would be employed not in conventional international combat, but in intra-national conflict to restore order. The 2d ACR is a unit that can respond all along the operational continuum, from combat to peacekeeping. The range of missions the regiment performs in Haiti stretches its operational capability and tests its subordinate unit leaders. On any given day, the squadrons of the regiment conduct day and night presence patrols on the streets of Port-au-Prince, maintain fixed-site security at key facilities across the city, and provide a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) for the Zone V commander and for employment by the UNMIH commander throughout the country. The squadron also protects Non-

governmental Organization (NGO) convoys and guards the National Palace (see Map 1).

Patrolling is the basic mission of the regiment in Haiti. The patrols include day and night "presence missions," and day and night "saturation missions." The basic unit of the presence patrol is the cavalry section — two scout HMMWVs commanded by a SSG, SFC, or lieutenant. The day and night presence patrols cover a wider area of the city (see Map 2). The pattern of the patrol again harkens back to the frontier days of cavalry. The patrol rides for 45 minutes and walks for 15. The coverage of these patrols is such that the troopers range throughout the zone and maintain contact with the people, maintaining a vital link in the continuous information-gathering effort. The day and night saturation patrols mix infantry soldiers and cavalry troopers. The basic element of these patrols is a cavalry section in HMMWVs and an infantry squad riding in a troop-carrying HMMWV. These patrols cover a smaller area of the city, but more thoroughly. These patrols go to the start point of their route mounted; then the squad dismounts, patrolling through streets too narrow for the mounted section. The vehicles link up with the dismounted element at designated locations and then continue the patrol. The patrols perform the standard cavalry



mission of reconnaissance, to confirm or deny priority information requirements, and the standing mission of maintaining a secure and stable environment through presence. The mobility and agility of the cavalry troop allow the commander to collapse patrols into key areas of the city in order to quell disturbances or control crowds.

Fixed-site security is another important element of the regiment's peace-keeping mission in Haiti. There are key sites within the city (see Map 2), designated as such for their actual or symbolic value, including the National Palace, the Light Industrial Complex, and Dragoon Base, the headquarters of U.S. Forces Haiti. The requirements of fixed-site security demand manpower from the squadrons. The fixed-site security mission can provide somewhat of a break for the infantry soldiers who ordinarily perform this mission. For example, at Dragoon Base the security squad lives in one of the air-conditioned tents used for the night shift. This gives the soldiers a break for quality sleep. But challenges on this type of mission do arise. Recently, a Haitian approached the gate guards asking if the Americans paid money for weapons. The answer is yes, during scheduled weapons buy-back periods. The Haitian then asked how much he could get for the four fragmentation hand grenades and one pipe bomb he was carrying. An exciting few minutes passed before the bomb was destroyed by the explosive ordnance detachment. The incident broke up a relatively quiet day.

The National Palace is the key symbol of power in the country. Protection of the president is also key to maintaining the stability of the country. The rifle companies attached to the 1st Squadron provide a reaction force for the palace and a tactical command post that travels with the president wherever he goes in the country. This TAC CP provides a link to UN forces and the QRF. The cavalry force provides the outer ring security for presidential travels in the country. Cavalry and infantry troopers performed this mission inside the city during the recent legislative elections. These security missions are a part of the peace operations needed to ensure the success of the UN mission. The challenges of ensuring a secure and stable environment also require a broader view of the entire country.

The final major mission of the regiment is providing both the Zone V/regimental commander and the UNMIH

Quick Reaction Force

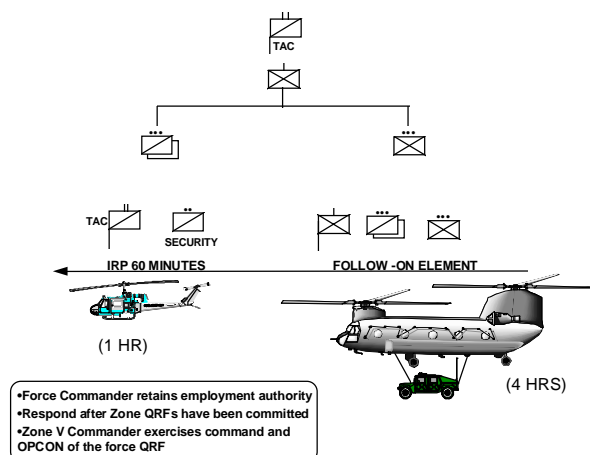


Figure 1

commander a Quick Reaction Force, ready for country-wide employment. The QRF maintains readiness through a series of internal Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercises (EDREs) conducted within and outside the city. The QRF is composed of two cavalry platoons and one infantry platoon. The command and control element is normally an infantry company (see Figure 1). The QRF deploys by either ground or air to crisis points, deployed by the UNMIH commander. Generally the QRF is preceded by a command and control helicopter that gets eyes on the scene. The squadron commander or his S3 usually rides in this helicopter. If required, a rifle or scout squad follow in a second helicopter. The remainder of

the QRF follows in a CH-47D with the scout HMMWVs carried as sling loads. The QRF can reach any area on the island within 60 minutes by helicopter, a tremendous reinforcement to any zone commander. The cavalry allows the UNMIH commander to respond with overwhelming force to any situation. While the QRF gives the commander the means of responding with overwhelming force as necessary, the daily situations faced by the cavalry trooper on the street require great discipline while on patrols.

The inherent value of participating in OOTW is the experience gained by small unit leaders. An OOTW patrol is not like a combat or reconnaissance pa-



2d ACR "Blue Helmets" on the streets of Port-au-Prince.

Zone V Forces

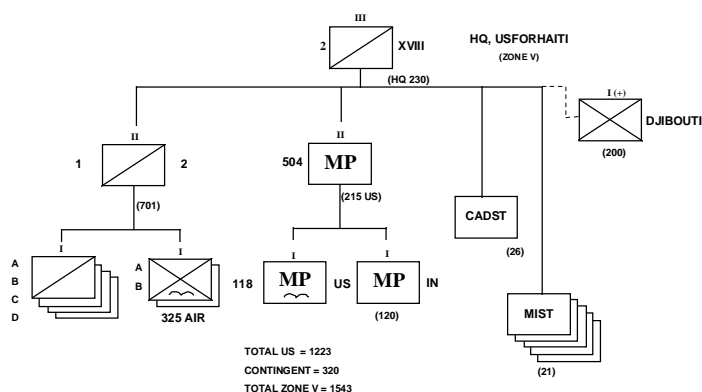


Figure 2

trol. In Haiti, the intent is for the patrol to be seen by the people. Patrol discipline remains the same. The patrol leader must ensure completion of everything from vehicle and weapons maintenance to individual equipment maintenance. He must also enforce the trooper readiness portion of the pre-combat checks. In the draining heat of Haiti, where the average daily temperature is 95 degrees, the patrol leader must ensure that everyone drinks water.

The potential for facing the unknown around any corner lends a sense of urgency to each patrol's pre-combat checks. The small unit leader must also write a patrol order and rehearse actions on contact with each member of the patrol. After mission completion, the patrol also goes through an extensive debriefing with the squadron S2. The mere fact that troopers mount up, load weapons, and head out of the secure compound onto the streets reminds troopers and their leaders to pay attention to detail.

After five months of patrolling under a variety of conditions, troopers and leaders of the 2d ACR return from Haiti as a seasoned force. The seasoning also extends to the staff experience which, although not as intense as a combat experience, still hones a fine edge.

The regimental staff provided the nucleus of a Joint Task Force (JTF) staff. The primary contribution is in the J3 and J2. The officers and troopers of the regiment perform the current operations function and planning function. The regimental S2 acts as the J2 Operations chief. In OOTW, the J2 provides the focus for operations. The J2 and J3 interact on a daily basis, thus

ensuring cross-training and increasing familiarity with the capabilities of both sections. The simple truth is, the J3 writes fragmentary orders each day that have the potential of placing troopers in harm's way. The J2 develops priority information (intelligence is not gathered in peacekeeping) requirements and supporting information requirements that establish the focus of effort for patrols. The joint staff checks the conditions on the street by patrolling both day and night. This ensures that the staff maintains a perspective on the efforts made by the line troopers, and the line troopers see the joint staff officers and troopers sharing the burden. The constant repetition of the process of evaluating higher headquarters fragmentary orders, writing JTF fragos, and overseeing execution of missions hones these skills in the regimental staff. There are purely combat functions of staff work that are not relevant in OOTW, such as the synchronization of fires and maneuver. These skills must be addressed in retraining upon return to home station.

When the regimental staff returns, it will require an extensive training effort on the integration of combined arms fires, something not practiced during a peacekeeping operation. The regimental commander will require a series of CPXs and computer-assisted exercises. The fieldcraft required to operate in a field tactical site will need refreshing. But the OOTW experience will bind a staff through shared experience, and given that base, the staff will regain its combat edge in a matter of months. Constant use of the military decision-making process and the production of the adjunct products will give any staff a superb start point.

The squadrons of the regiment will also require retraining to attain the combat edge. The foundation of small unit discipline refined on the streets of Port-au-Prince gives the squadrons a great start point. Current retraining plans include mounted and dismounted gunnery, combat and reconnaissance patrolling, and integration of all arms into maneuver training at Fort Polk and Fort Chaffee. The focus of the main effort will be on regaining the skills necessary to win in combat.

It is axiomatic that the toughest mission facing any unit is combat. The 2d ACR found that the discipline required for combat makes it easier to transition to the tasks and discipline required in OOTW. The military exists to fight the nation's wars. Since war is an extension of policy by other means, so too are OOTW an extension of policy through other means. Since January 1995 to the completion of the UN mission, the 2d ACR, a part of the military means of national power, extends national policy by placing disciplined, trained troopers on the streets of Port-au-Prince maintaining a secure and stable environment.

The inherent flexibility of light cavalry provides an ideal force of all arms that can operate in any situation along the operational continuum. In its present form of an all wheeled cavalry force, to the future form as a force equipped with the AGS, armored HMMWV, JAVELIN, and NLOS, the regiment will continue to provide a flexible, agile, and lethal force that can respond to OOTW or combat missions.

Lieutenant Colonel Kevin C.M. Benson currently serves as the Chief of Staff, U.S. Forces Haiti. He is also the executive officer of the 2d ACR, Fort Polk, La. He served in tank and cavalry units in the U.S. and Europe, and also served on the XVIII Airborne Corps staff, G3 Plans. He has been published in *Military Review*, *Infantry*, and *Special Operations* magazines. He was assisted in this effort by COL Walter Sharp, commander, 2d ACR; LTC Bill Weber, commander, 1/2 ACR; and CPT Chris Thrash, Chief of Plans, JTF Dragoon and 2d ACR.